



# The climate crisis and mental health

Mental Health and World Crises National ARC webinar

17 May 2023

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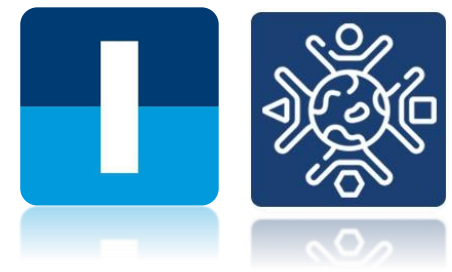
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# Acknowledgements



- **Dr Neil Jennings:** Partnership Development Manager, Grantham Institute Climate Change and the Environment, Imperial College London.
- **Dr Emma Lawrance:** Mental Health Lead & Climate Cares Lead, Institute of Global Health Innovation, Imperial College London
- **Other information sources:**
- **Grantham Institute,** Imperial College London. 9 things you can do for health and the planet.  
<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/stories/healthy-planet/>
- **Cambridge University:** <http://www.eng.cam.ac.uk/news/new-resource-tick-zero-s-real-climate-solutions>
- Kovats, S. and Brisley, R. (2021) Health, communities and the built environment. In: The Third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment Technical Report[Betts, R.A., Haward, A.B., Pearson, K.V. (eds.)]. Prepared for the Climate Change Committee, London <https://www.ukclimaterisk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CCRA3-Chapter-5-FINAL.pdf>

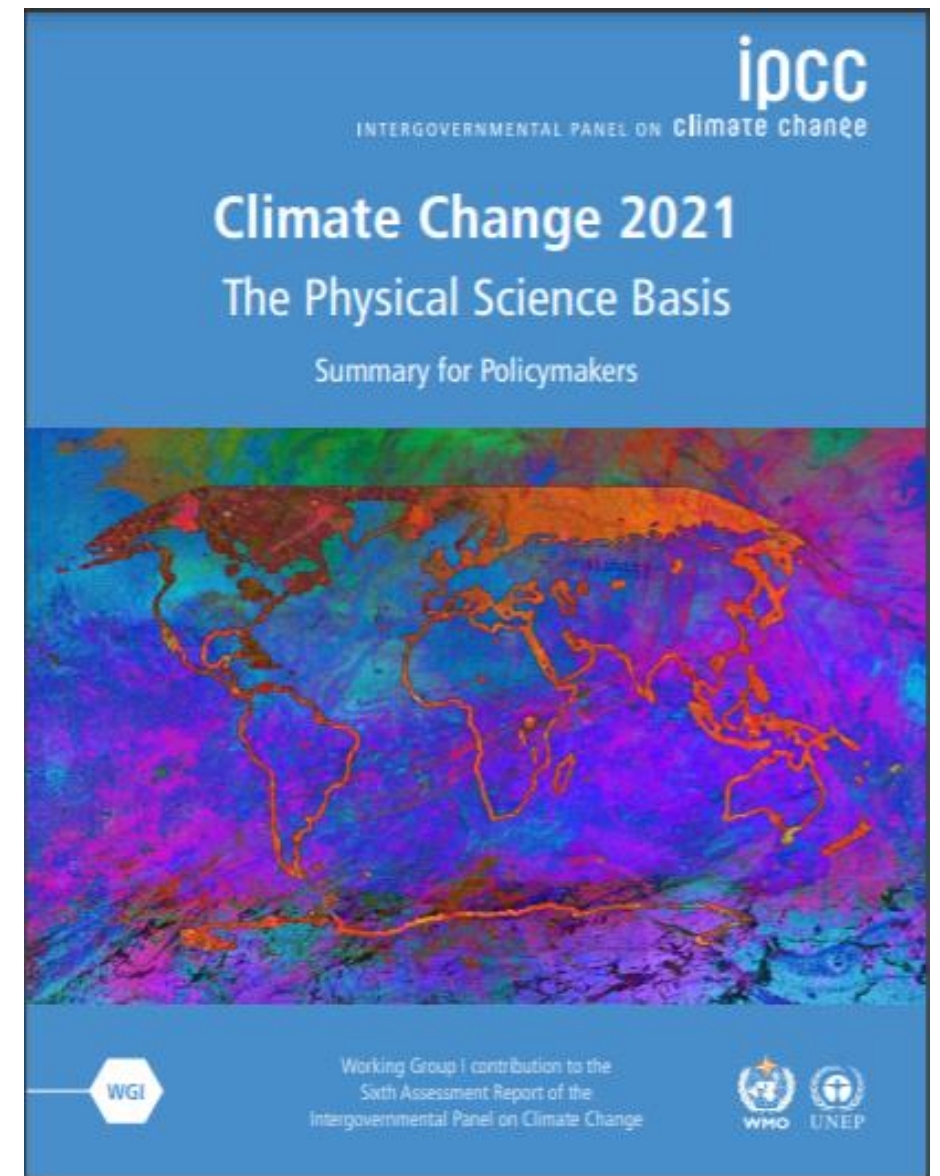


## The Aims

- To consider and discuss
  - The climate crisis and health – the facts
  - How the climate crisis is affecting mental health and wellbeing, especially in young people
  - The intersection between climate, health and racial justice

# What does climate science say?

- UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change since 1988
- Governed by 195 member states
- Sixth Assessment Report published
- Written by 234 authors from 65 countries giving time for free
- 14,000 scientific publications assessed
- Issued 'the starkest warning yet'

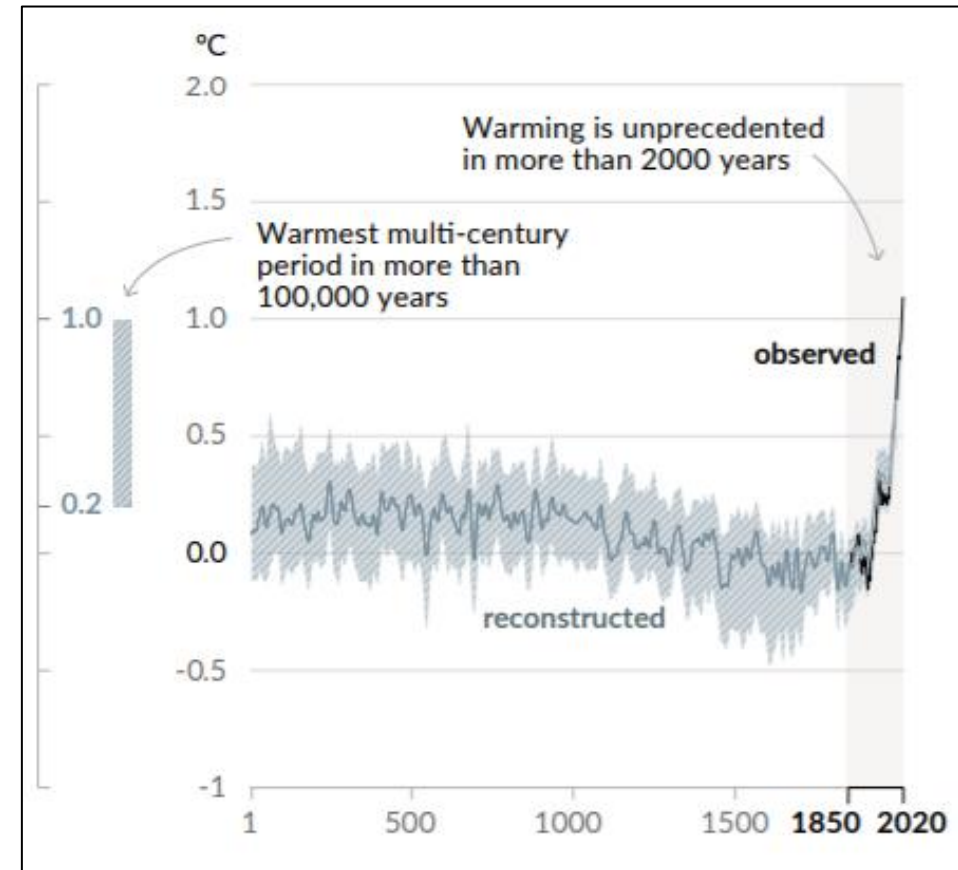


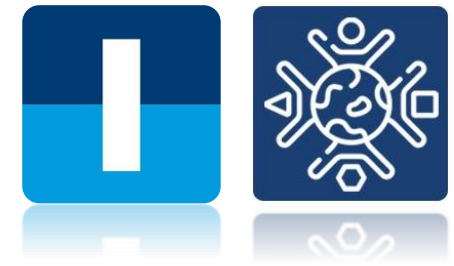
## IPCC headline statements – current climate

*“It is **unequivocal** that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land”*

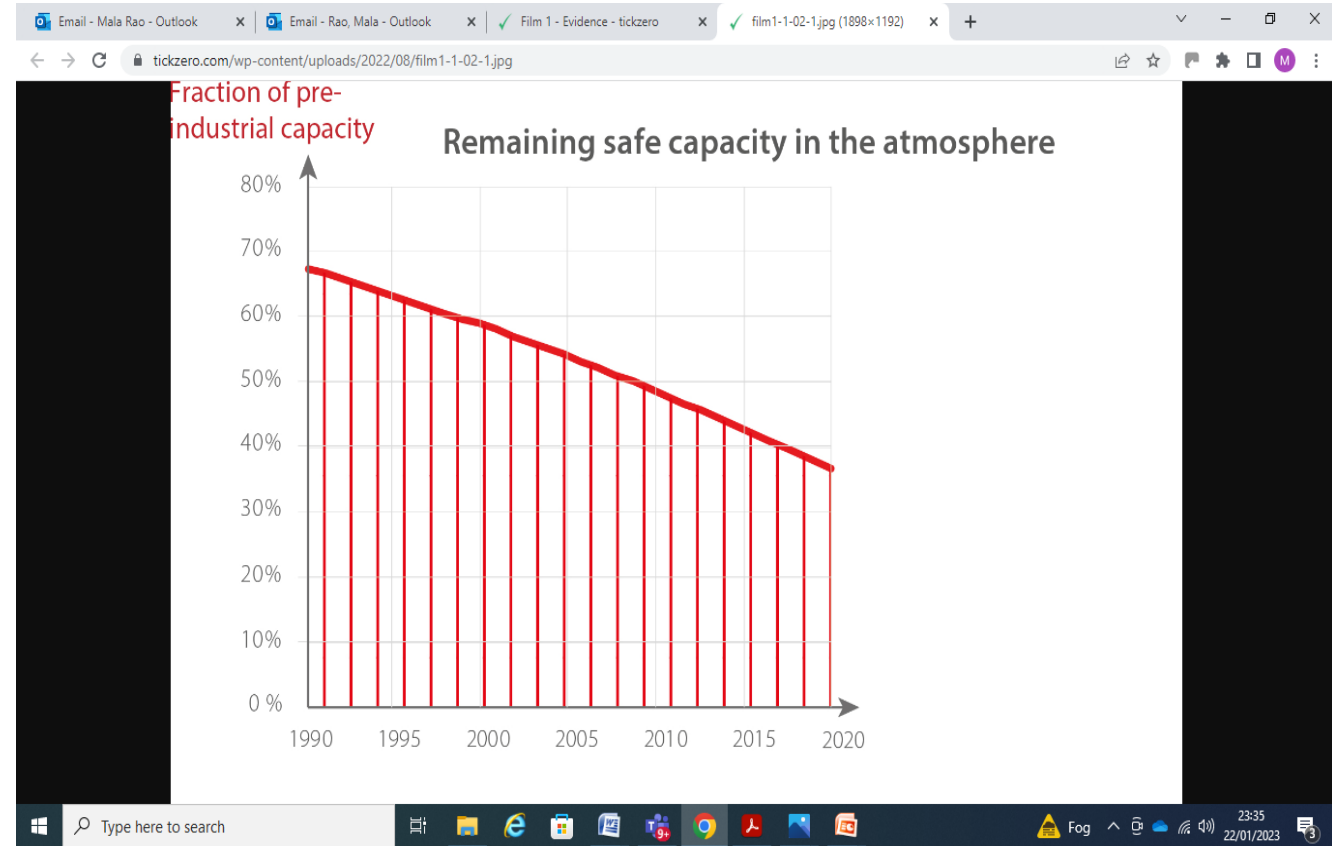
*“The scale of recent changes across the climate system ... are **unprecedented** over many centuries to many thousands of years”*

*IPCC (2021)*





- ‘Since 1990, the global population has filled half of the remaining safe capacity in the atmosphere with emissions. If this continues to grow in line with the past, then we will hit the unsafe limit of the climate’s carrying capacity before 2050’.



## IPCC headline statements – current climate

*“Human-induced climate change is already affecting many weather and climate extremes **in every region across the globe.**”*

*E.g. heatwaves, droughts, heavy precipitation, tropical cyclones.*

*IPCC (2021)*



<https://www.carbonbrief.org/media-reaction-australias-bushfires-and-climate-change>

# IPCC headline statements – future climate

*“Continued global warming is projected to further intensify the global water cycle, including its variability, global monsoon precipitation and the severity of wet and dry events”  
IPCC (2021)*

## Storm Ida: Flash flooding in New York and New Jersey kills nine

2 September



The record rainfall caused flash flooding in New York City



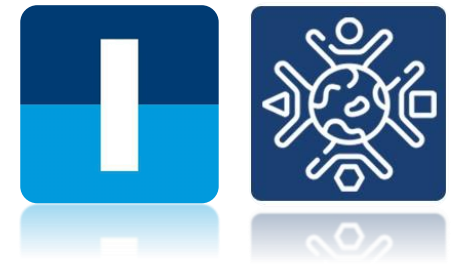
## IPCC headline statements – future climate

*“Global warming of 1.5°C and 2°C will be exceeded during the 21st century unless **deep reductions in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other greenhouse gas emissions occur in the coming decades.**”*

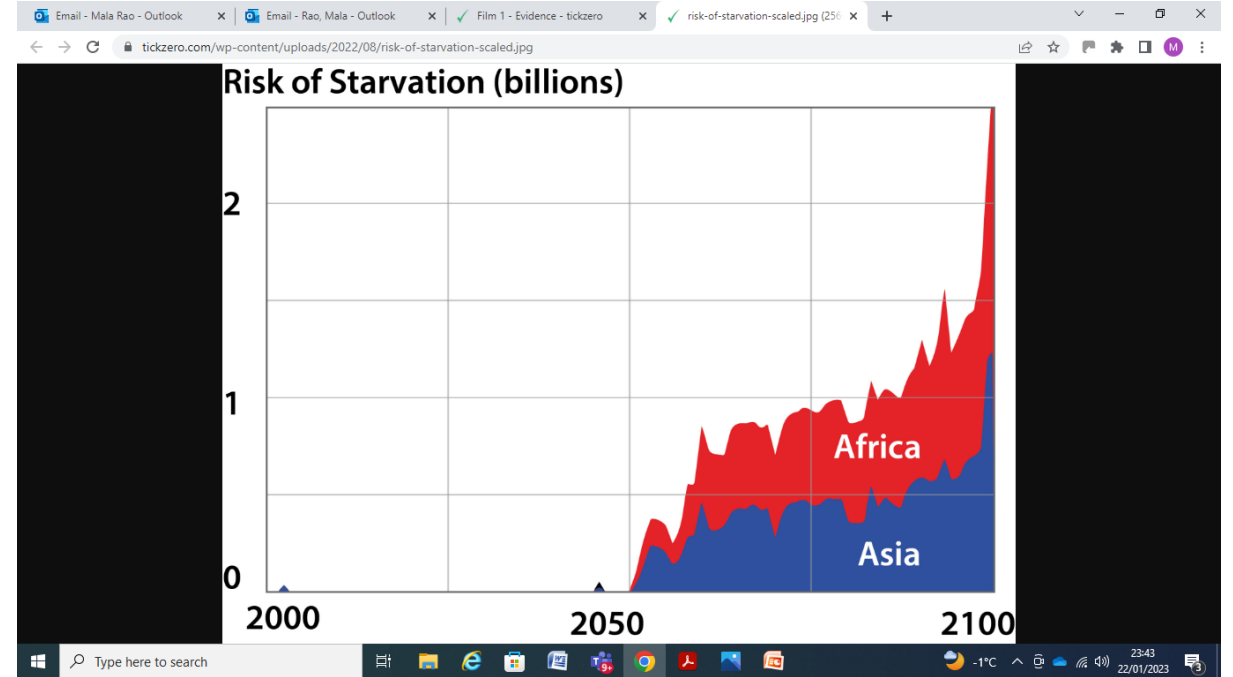
*IPCC (2021)*



# The human impact



“.. we’re going to run out of food,” warned Professor Julian Allwood. “By the end of this century, over one billion people living near the equator are at risk of starvation as a result of climate change, which would be an unimaginable tragedy”.



## IPCC headline statements – future climate

*“Limiting human-induced global warming to a specific level requires... reaching **at least net zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions**, along with strong reductions in other greenhouse gas emissions”*

*IPCC (2021)*



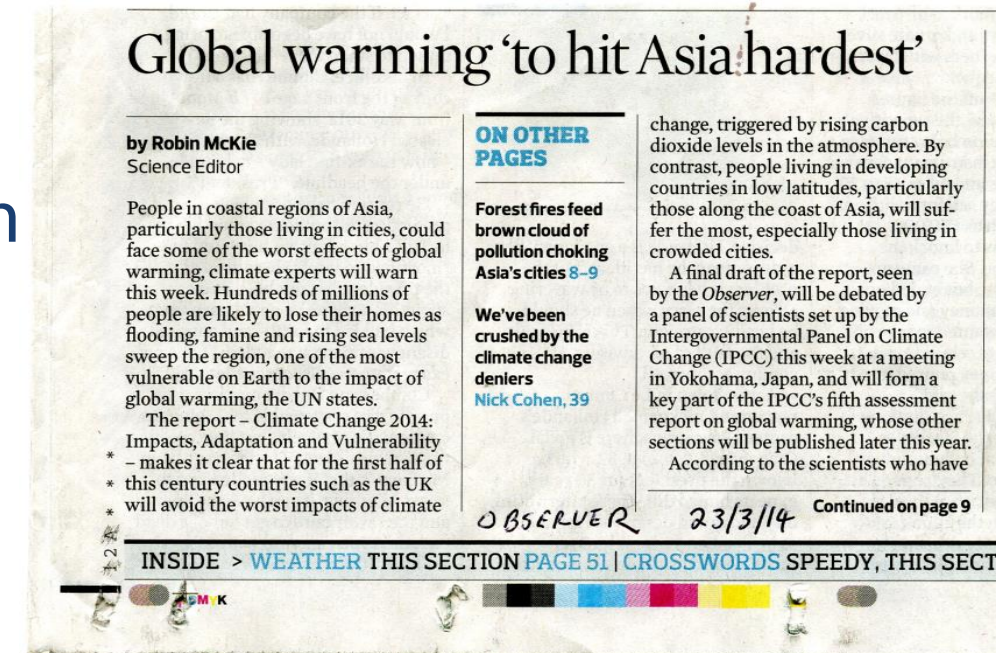
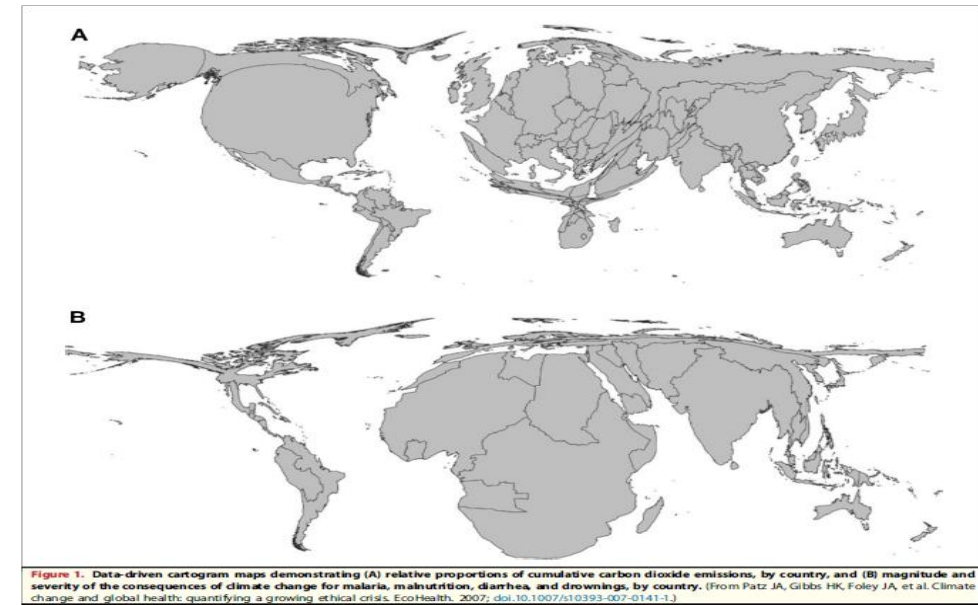
## COP26 President Alok Sharma:

- ‘We can now say with credibility that we have kept 1.5 degrees alive. But, its pulse is weak and it will only survive if we keep our promises and translate commitments into rapid action.
- Because as Prime Minister Mia Mottley told us at the start of this conference, for Barbados and other small island states, two degrees is a death sentence’.
- Need to shift into climate emergency mode
- The context is the speed, intensity and irreversibility of climate and ecological breakdown
- Already island nations such as Kiribati are planning en masse moves



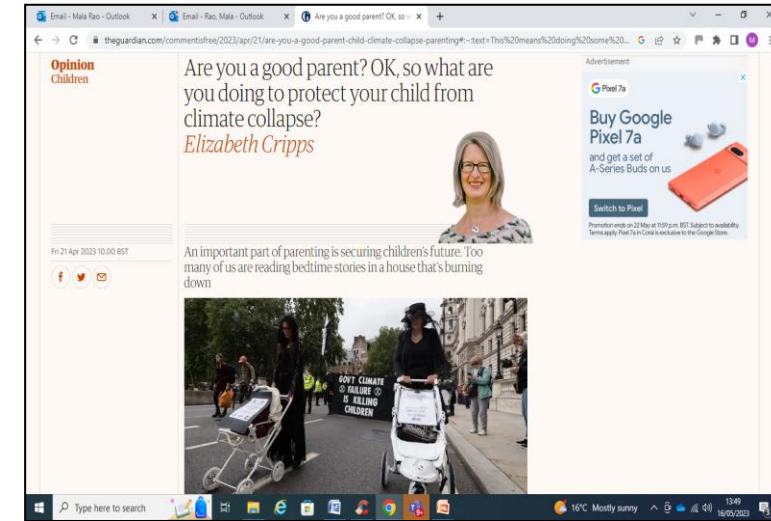
# So why is this especially relevant to the intersection of *Climate, race and mental health?*

- Unequal burdens of the climate crisis reflect race inequalities on a global scale
- Ethnic minority communities face disproportionately greater risk of factors such as air pollution, also linked to global warming
- Overseas families of ethnic minority NHS staff may be directly affected



# The rise in eco-anxiety

- Eco-anxiety, the chronic fear of environmental doom, is growing
- Disproportionately affects children, young people, and the most vulnerable communities
- It matters - experiencing climate change effects associated with increased risks of mental illnesses
- Affecting reproductive choices
- 57% child psychiatrists in England seeing children and young people distressed about the climate crisis
- The “largest and most international” survey of climate anxiety in young people aged 16 to 25 to date – betrayed and abandoned by governments and adults
- 75% of adults are worried and likely to take action

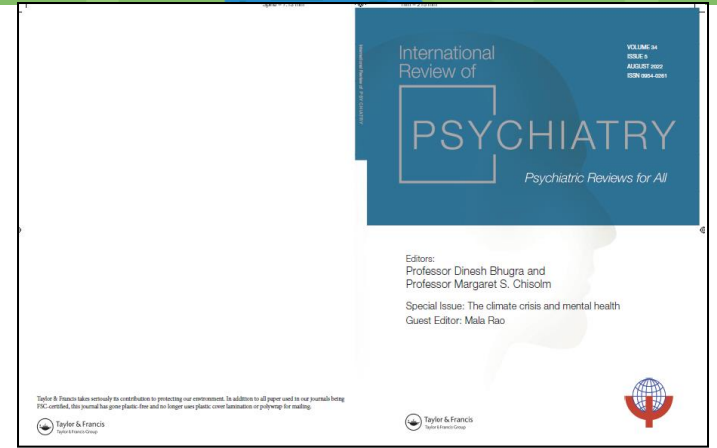
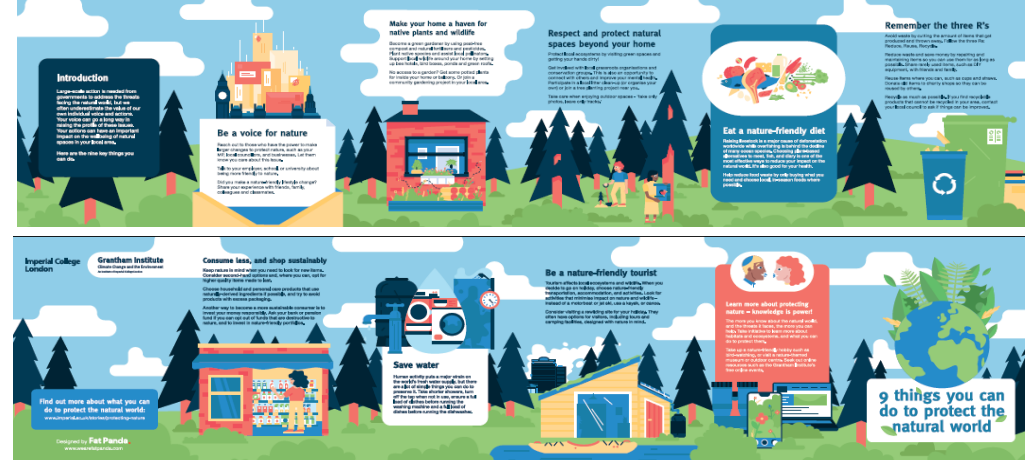


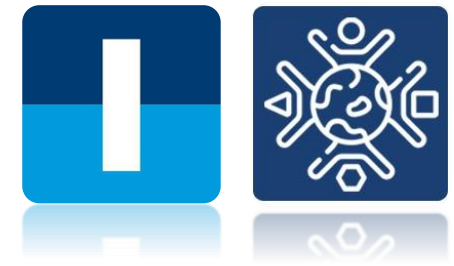
# Actions to address eco-anxiety

- Implications are profound
- Hopelessness and despair – risk inaction
- Research needed on
  - Prevalence of eco-anxiety
  - Likely impacts – social, health and economic
  - Actions to address this

➤ Translating anxiety into practical action is an effective way to manage emotions but we need more research and discourse

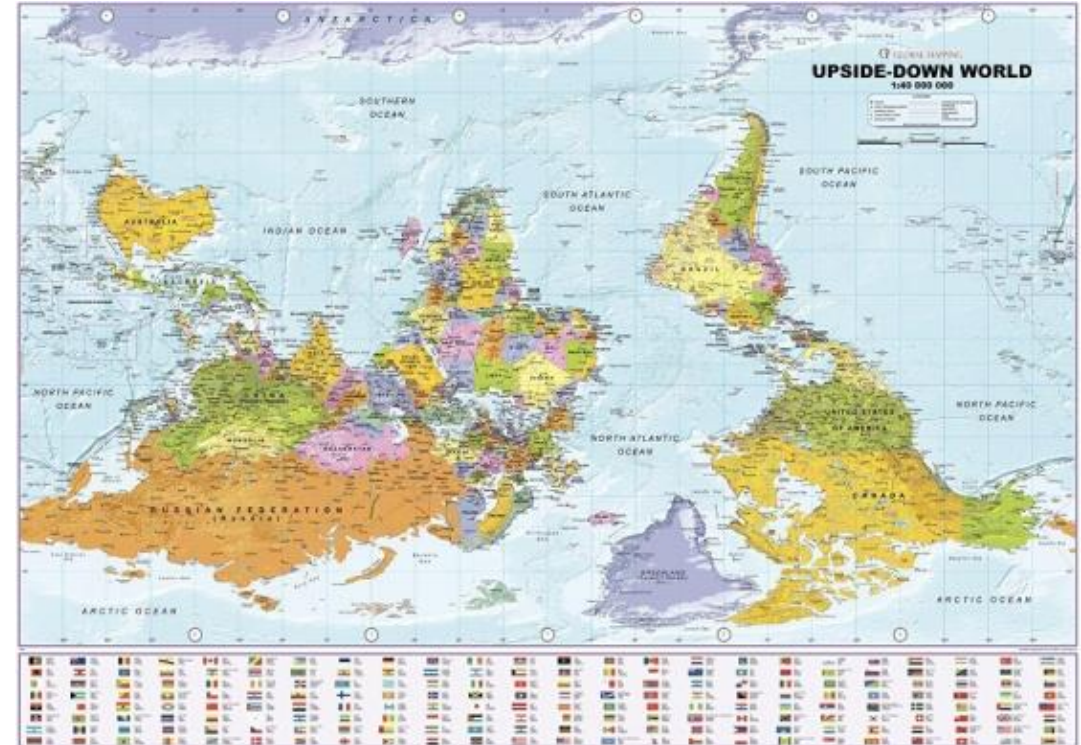
- Protest activism
- Non-cooperation





# Conclusion

- There is an urgent need for us all to enhance our inputs to climate action, advocacy, research
- We have the collective potential to transform societal engagement in climate action, change despair into hope, and achieve health equity
- There is enormous potential for global cooperation and solidarity to ensure health and wellbeing and a sustainable future for everyone everywhere



[https://www.amazon.co.uk/UpSide-Down-World-Political-Wall/dp/B07DCWV1DY/ref=asc\\_df\\_B07DCWV1DY/?tag=googshopuk-21&linkCode=df0&hvadid=570409092446&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=8618284058345408281&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9045997&hvtargid=pla-573942795810&th=1](https://www.amazon.co.uk/UpSide-Down-World-Political-Wall/dp/B07DCWV1DY/ref=asc_df_B07DCWV1DY/?tag=googshopuk-21&linkCode=df0&hvadid=570409092446&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=8618284058345408281&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9045997&hvtargid=pla-573942795810&th=1)